



## President's Message: March 2015

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Posted: Wednesday, February 25, 2015 Posted: 8:02:58 AM CT



During World War II, Lockheed Corp. was tasked by the U.S. military with developing new aircraft that could affect the course of the war. They soon realized that the types of creativity and innovation needed to develop these new aircraft were being hampered by the company's policies, rules, ways of doing business and bureaucracy.

Lockheed's response was to set up what became known as the "Skunk Works": a group of scientists and engineers who were exempt from the confines of bureaucracy. This process was so successful that the term "skunk works" has entered the vernacular as a designation for any group within an organization that is given freedom from the on-going rules and bureaucracy so that they can dream, create and innovate.

During my first year at WSU, many of you told me of your experiences with our bureaucracy that you felt got in the way not only of your creativity, but of even being able to effectively accomplish your normal job. Dr. Charles Burdsal and his graduate students conducted a survey of faculty and staff at my request, and this survey confirmed a strong feeling on the campus that our policies, processes, practices and bureaucracy needed reformation and simplification. His research showed that many of you felt:

- There were too many layers of approval on routine transactions, especially involving hiring, research grants, travel and purchasing.
- Too many forms were being circulated on paper, long after most of the world moved to digital.
- Decisions were being made or blocked for reasons defying logic.

Several offices also were highlighted as "choke points" that were slow to respond, or their responses seemed to create more, unnecessary work.

It became clear from various conversations and from the survey results that if WSU was going to achieve its mission and become the creative, innovative university that was so needed in this

region and state, we had to take on the overly restrictive and bureaucratic structures that defined so much of how we did our business. That work has been engaged for the past two years, and there has been a great deal of progress. Now, I'm far from ready to declare victory, but we're making progress. I would appreciate your help spreading the word that the university should operate in ways that are legal, logical and non-bureaucratic. As a state entity, we will not be able to gain the freedom of a true "skunk works," but we can and will continue to do better.

If you're constantly filling out forms that appear to make no sense, or there's clearly a preferable alternative, ask your supervisor or department head why it has to be that way. The university has an interest in good decision-making, minimizing risk and maintaining good documentation, but no interest in paperwork for its own sake.

I liked a recent exchange between Karen Wright, a student advisor in Electrical Engineering Computer Science, and Provost Tony Vizzini.

Karen's note said:

*As a new employee, I am surprised by the amount of paper used across campus. All of the documents (in all colleges) and forms (i.e. applications for degree, student files, human resources documents, etc.) can all be uploaded to an electronic system, rather than printing a paper form... Electronic and digital forms can (and will) cut costs and more importantly, it is truly better for the environment.*

Tony Vizzini responded:

*I cannot agree more with you. I too have noticed that many of our processes are paper and signature intensive. We are making progress, though. Travel is now completely paperless; requests, expense reports, and approvals are all electronic. We are also bringing the graduate application processing to the digital world. We are trying to streamline the Faculty Activity Report to make use of external data to populate the form. This does take a lot of coordination between several offices and ITS, but we are making progress.*

*I appreciate your relatively new view of WSU. You have the advantage of seeing where we are with a fresh perspective. Keep asking questions. Help us become a better university to serve our students and society.*

*Thanks.*

Whether you're new to campus or a long-time veteran, I hope you'll keep an eye on our processes and help us be as innovative in routine tasks as we are trying to be in larger matters.

# Innovation Occurring Across Campus

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Posted: Wednesday, February 25, 2015 Posted: 8:44:30 AM CT



Thank you for all of your responses to last month's newsletter request for how you are incorporating innovation in your work.

I'm encouraged by innovation efforts already underway, and I want to keep the conversation going. To encourage that, Provost Tony Vizzini and I have committed to up to 25 meetings with faculty and staff in coming months to discuss innovation-related topics. The first meeting will be held March 30. Read WSU Today for details on upcoming sessions.

Our goal is to offer a wide enough variety of subjects that all of you will find at least one subject of interest.

Here's some flavor of the responses we received to last month's newsletter:

- We liked the overall advice from Counseling and Testing Center Director Maureen Dasey-Morales that we create a campus culture of innovation that includes daily communication and dedicated time for brainstorming. We absolutely agreed with her that we don't want to pigeonhole innovation as being just about research and technology. She also let us know about suicide prevention efforts her staff is working on.
- Katie Austin, interim director of Housing and Residence Life, has been working closely with Information Technology Services to develop housing assignment software to allow residents to seamlessly view their housing options and have more control over their room assignments.
- Campus Recreation Director Eric Maki and his staff have been looking at how Heskett Center facilities and programs can be more accessible to those who will live and work on the Innovation Campus.
- Nancy Loosle, director of Student Involvement, told us about a myriad of happenings in her area. Working with the Media Resources Center, Student Involvement will soon offer online training for students and advisors who can't attend training sessions.
- Student Involvement is working on ways to improve Greek life. A new, guided recruitment strategy will be implemented this summer to provide better training for recruitment and retention, non-bid signing and marketing. Another Greek life initiative provides training and retreats to help officers of the three Greek councils work cooperatively.
- Jim Granada, senior fellow and director of the WSU College Readiness Partnership Initiative in the College of Education, says there are cutting-edge efforts here at WSU to make prospective teachers the best among the competition. "We are doing things other universities are not, primarily because most higher education institutions focus on students once they are on campus or once they have been accepted, and only on that target audience," he says. "I seize opportunities to broaden an understanding of the complexity of the college readiness concept."
- Kevin Bomhoff, director of Strategic Development at the Center for Community Support and

Research, said: “We need to have an authentic desire to understand and be curious about how we, each of us, may contribute to the status quo even as we profess a deep desire for improvement. A big step is when we make our goal learning, rather than immediate success or failure.”

# Our Time Media Campaign

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Posted: Wednesday, February 25, 2015 Posted: 8:24:04 AM CT



Now that you've been seeing Wichita State's "Our Time" media campaign for a few months, you may be wondering about its value and what we're learning. Although it's too early to measure the results on traditional media, like television and newspaper advertising, the campaign's digital advertising is showing remarkable impact.

So far, targeted advertising on the Web has delivered over 3.5 million impressions and nearly 5,000 click-throughs—that is, people who click on the message and directly visit WSU's campaign webpage. In fact, of all the visitors to that webpage, 78 percent have come from online advertising. Almost 17 percent have come from advertising on YouTube alone.

The current campaign will run through May, then will be adjusted through the summer months to appeal to prospective students seeking fall enrollment.

# What I'm Reading

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Posted: Wednesday, February 25, 2015 Posted: 8:12:57 AM CT



## *Innovation Imperative: Meet Generation Z*

Generation Z (Gen-Z), born 1995 to present, is different from the previous Millennial generation, born 1977 to 1994. Because these generations are merging on campus, it is important for us to learn these differences for us to remain highly effective.

For the past decade, much research has focused on Gen-Y (a.k.a. Millennials). Millennials are perhaps the most researched generation in history.

Today, we are just beginning to understand Gen-Z and its impact on the future. This past fall, Northeastern University undertook a national survey of young people, aged 16-19, with the intent of presenting a portrait of this new generation.

It's no surprise that Generation Z's entrepreneurial and independent attitude extends to views of higher education. For example, 72 percent say they want a more customized college experience in which colleges allow students to design their own course of study or major. Nearly two-thirds say it's extremely or very important that colleges teach students about entrepreneurship, including how to start their own businesses. Moreover, nearly eight in 10 prefer that education programs be integrated with practical experience, such as internships with employers.

The majority of Gen-Zers think colleges should allow students to design their own majors, should integrate practical experience into programs and should offer skills such as financial planning. Their perspectives reflect a generation shaped by the Great Recession: self-reliant but troubled about the future, imbued with an entrepreneurial spirit, and less fixated on technology than might be presumed. They hope for a shot at the American Dream through a college education that is traditional in some ways, but different in others. And they believe, strongly, that everyone deserves equal treatment.

For more information and findings, go to <http://bit.ly/1F6WDfN>

<http://bit.ly/181BYIB>

# About this Newsletter

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## *OUR MISSION*

The mission of Wichita State University is to be an essential educational, cultural and economic driver for Kansas and the greater public good. The President's Message is a monthly newsletter that highlights the university's progress toward fulfilling that mission.

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## *CONTACT US*

We would like to hear from you. Please send your comments and suggestions to [lou.heldman@wichita.edu](mailto:lou.heldman@wichita.edu)

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## *PRESIDENT'S EXECUTIVE TEAM*

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**John Tomblin**, Vice President for Research and Technology Transfer, Executive Director for NIAR

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